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WASHINGTON—Blistering record heat in Europe this summer helped kill more than 50,000 people, with nearly two-thirds of that death toll blamed on human-caused climate change, a new study found.

DAILY TRIBUNE

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By: Windsor John Genova

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By: Jean Mangaluz

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SUNSTAR

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By: Evangel Ibay

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THE JAPAN TIMES

What can Asia do to avoid crossing crucial climate tipping points?
By: Tomoko Otake

Petaling Jaya, Malaysia – Ambulance sirens blaring throughout cities amid deadly heat waves. Sustained wildfires that worsen cross-border air pollution and kill thousands. Weakening ocean currents that devastate crops and flood communities.

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The future will test our promises
By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

Years ago, in Lake Sebu, I met Nanay Rosie Sula, a T'boli woman leader and Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan awardee. She recalled when elders could read the seasons, fish were plentiful, and nature was a gift to be cared for. Then she said: "We began to abuse nature and got more than we needed." The climate, she told me, was changing.

CCC chairs carbon markets panel

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) welcomes its designation as chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Carbon Markets (IACCM) under Executive Order (EO) 127, which establishes a governance framework for the Philippines' participation in international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and in the Voluntary Carbon Market.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

CCC advances country's climate reporting system institutionalization

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), with support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through its technical cooperation project, is strengthening the Philippines' capacity to implement, monitor, and report on its climate commitments through the validation of the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) Guidance.

THE CLIMATE WATCH

COP31 names 10 co-facilitators to steer key climate talks in Antalya
By: Sohanur Rahman

Ministerial pairs from 10 countries tasked with building consensus on finance, adaptation, mitigation, just transition and oceans ahead of Antalya summit.

EXPLAINED PH

Scorched at a stalemate
By: Audley Aban

As rising temperatures and uncontrollable climates arrive at their tipping points, the battle between humanity and nature has reached a scorching stalemate. One that desperately requires a recalibration of efforts toward actionable measures and not simply towards mindless scapegoating—which can only be done if we play our pieces right.

MANILA BULLETIN

Legarda pushes for climate action beyond disaster response; says livelihood security a must
By: By Dhel Nazario

Senator Loren Legarda is urging the government to strengthen climate policies that not only protect Filipinos from disasters but also help them secure stable livelihoods, food and water supplies, and better economic opportunities as climate risks intensify.

BUSINESS MIRROR

Beyond the climate crisis: Turning risks into actions

CLIMATE change is one of the most significant challenges facing businesses and society today. According to World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the planet has already warmed by approximately 1.4°C above pre-industrial levels, contributing to more intense heatwaves, rising sea levels, declining crop yields, and accelerating biodiversity loss. These impacts extend beyond the environment, affecting how businesses operate, manage risks, allocate capital, and plan for long-term growth and resilience.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Europe's killer heat this summer claims 50K lives. Climate change blamed for two-thirds of deaths

WASHINGTON—Blistering record heat in Europe this summer helped kill more than 50,000 people, with nearly two-thirds of that death toll blamed on human-caused climate change, a new study found.

Researchers modeled heat-related deaths for different age groups in 854 European cities during repeated heat waves in June, July and August and found that 50,391 people died from warmer temperatures, and of those, 32,619 died because of the extra heat caused by the burning of coal, oil and gas, according to a study in an upcoming issue of Nature Health.

That's 71% higher than the previous deadliest summer, which was 29,480 in 2022, according to the same researchers, who produced a study earlier this month tracking yearly summer heat-related deaths in those European cities.

And this summer's death figures are underestimates because they don't count a deadly heat wave in May and they only look at deaths in those 854 cities, which are about 40% of Europe's population, study authors said.

About one-third of the deaths were from June 17 to July 1, a particularly intense heat wave when temperatures were 9.5 degrees Fahrenheit (5.3 degrees Celsius) above normal, said study co-author Garyfallos Konstantinoudis, a biostatistician at Imperial College London.

"Much of Western and Northern Europe, our infrastructure is just not designed to cope with the sort of temperatures that we are seeing now because of the effects of human-caused warming," said lead author Clair Barnes, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. She said some European cities this summer had temperatures 21.6 F (12 C) warmer than normal.

Of those 50,000, more than 32,000 died from the added heat of human-caused climate change, the study also found. Italy, France, Spain and Germany had the highest death tolls, the study said.

Of all the European capitals, Rome had the highest heat death total from 2000 to 2025, according to the team's study earlier this month.

An extra dose of heat from fossil fuel burning

This would've already been an abnormal natural hot spell on top of a huge amount of climate change, Barnes said. She said Europe is the fastest-warming continent—although the Arctic, which is not a continent, is warming even faster—and is 4.5 F (2.5 C) hotter than pre-industrial times.

“Just the underlying warming from human activity, from mostly the burning of fossil fuels, it’s increasing all of our temperatures by what sounds like quite a small amount,” Barnes said. “For many people, it’s certainly the case that that extra two-and-a-half degrees (Celsius) of warming is what’s going to tip those temperatures from uncomfortable to dangerous and potentially deadly.”

More than half of the people who died in Europe’s heat were age 85 or older, but the stifling temperatures also killed more than 800 people between the ages of 20 and 44, Konstantinoudis said.

How the death numbers are calculated

The team used an established and accepted scientific method to figure out how many of the 50,000 heat deaths were from natural high summer heat and how many were due to what heat-trapping gases have done to the climate. They ran computer simulations of a world without climate change and compared it to the deaths that happened this summer. The difference is what was caused by global warming.

The percentage of heat deaths attributable to global warming has grown from about 45% in the early 2000s to 65% now, Barnes said.

“Summers are getting hotter, and the analytical tools for attributing deaths to heat are getting more accurate,” said Dr. Howard Frumkin, former director of the National Center for Environmental Health in the US, who wasn’t part of the study. “Together, these two trends yield increasingly high and increasingly accurate counts of heat-related deaths.”

The scientific team also had to use statistical modeling to come up with the base count of 50,000 heat deaths because those deaths are underreported and often not listed in death certificates, despite being a major factor, Konstantinoudis said. Several outside experts agreed with him, calling the methods state-of-the-art.

The researchers ran a complex mathematical equation that has been used in several previously peer-reviewed studies, Barnes said, which factors in specific age and temperatures for each of the 854 cities based on a localized optimal temperature that coincides with the fewest deaths. When it’s warmer or colder, the equation calculates excess deaths above lowest-death conditions.

Researchers then checked their calculations against real-time estimates from government agencies. Mostly—but not always—they matched fairly well, Konstantinoudis said. The team’s methods for May and June British heat waves calculated 2,700 excess deaths and the United Kingdom health statistics agency said it was 2,800, he said.

Cooling and adapting are needed, but they’re not enough

“We need to prepare for the heat we cannot now avoid, with urgent investments in heat early-warning systems, equitable access to low-carbon cooling, and neighborhood buddy systems that check on and support people most at risk—while rapidly reducing the fossil fuel use driving the crisis,” said Canadian emergency room physician Dr. Courtney Howard, president-elect of the Canadian Medical Association, who wasn’t part of the research.

Adapting is only part of the answer, said Dr. Jonathan Patz of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who wasn’t part of the research but also praised it.

“We can’t just be mopping up the mess on the floor without thinking about turning the faucet off,” said Patz, a professor of health and the environment. “So we need prevention at different levels. We need better cooling and protecting vulnerable populations from inevitable increased frequency and extreme heat waves. But we also need to go to the root of the problem and absolutely address the burning of fossil fuels.”

DAILY TRIBUNE

UN, gov't agencies bare actions to Very Strong El Niño

By: Windsor John Genova

United Nations agencies in the Philippines are beefing up the government's response to the Very Strong El Niño (VSEN) as drought already hit nine provinces while 109 areas have declared a state of calamity due to the weather phenomenon.

Speaking at the United Nations press briefing on El Niño and early action on climate shocks at the IOM office in Makati City last 22 October, Ana Liza S. Solis, chief of the Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section of the Climatology and Agrometeorology Division of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) identified the nine provinces as Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Leyte, Negros Oriental, Samar, Siquijor and Misamis Oriental.

Solis also mentioned 32 provinces under a dry spell and 14 provinces under dry condition, all identifiable in the PAGASA website's El Niño monitoring page. Areas under a state of calamity are in all the mentioned provinces, she added.

VSEN, which is characterized by higher probability of below-normal rainfall and warmer temperatures in many parts of the country, started as early as June and PAGASA predicts it will last until May 2027, according to Solis. The weather condition could affect water availability, agriculture production, energy demand and workforce productivity, she warned.

Areas along the western section of the country were the first to experience a significant rainfall reduction and this region's dry spell is expected to last until the first quarter of 2027, Solis explained.

"As the rainy season eases, the dry spell and drought in the western part of the country may ease, while parts of the Visayas and Mindanao could still experience dry conditions," she said.

PAGASA's role, Solis said, is to provide localized agrometeorological advisories to help farmers in 100 municipalities across 9 provinces and 5 regions adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices. The agency also provides climate services to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"Our goal here is to transform early warnings into early actions," Solis told reporters. "Reliable climate information combined with effective risk management reduces losses and builds long-term resilience."

Meanwhile, Solis revealed that PAGASA is still developing its impact-based forecasting and early warning system for drought or the anticipatory action framework for drought following the signing of the implementing rules and regulations for Republic Act 12287 or the Declaration of

State of Imminent Disaster Act (DSIDA), which institutionalizes anticipatory action and allows a state of imminent disaster to be declared before a calamity occurs.

The agency is working with the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, and the Philippine Space Agency to develop a national and government-led triggers and threshold for anticipatory action for drought.

Jose Barber, representing the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), which is the implementing arm of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, said the agency's preparedness goes beyond contingency plans and emergency supplies."

The OIC for policy development and planning service of the OCD said the agency positions essential supplies, facilitates early evacuation where necessary, protects critical families, supports vulnerable households, and safeguards livelihoods and food supplies.

"The preparations are adequate, including bottled water, rice, water filtration and desalination systems, generators, family packs, kitchen kits, and so forth and so on. And we have also the pre-action plan easily available for those who have declared a state of calamity," Barber said.

Both PAGASA and OCD work with other national agencies, local government units and the UN agencies, such as the Philippines offices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAOP), International Organization for Migration (IOMP), United Nations Development Program, United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEFP), World Food Program (WFPP) and World Health Organization (WHOP).

Barber also gave an update on the implementation of the DSIDA. He said LGUs may complete the operational guidelines (OG) for the law's IRR in the next three to four months. Pending the OGs, city and town leaders can still declare a state of calamity for the funding of disaster response.

Meanwhile, WFPP representative and country director Regis Chapman said they are working on providing technical assistance to government partners for evidence generation. He added that WFPP supports the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Project LAWA and BINHI, which gives communities cash incentives for building or improving small farm reservoirs, rain-harvesting facilities, irrigation systems; rehabilitating waterways; and growing vegetables for food security during drought.

Dulce Carandang, assistant representative for program of FAOP, said her agency worked with the Department of Agriculture and DSWD in piloting drought anticipatory action in Echague, Isabela that involved cash transfers, tools, inputs and training for some 900 farming households.

Carandang added that FAOP will soon deploy six mobile solar irrigation pump system and one high-density polyethylene fish cage in Isabela and Cagayan to help some 10,000 farmers and fishers protect their livelihood.

IOMP chief of mission Tristan Burnett said it is working with the government in identifying recipients of the Climate Mobility Investment Plan, which helps barangay or municipality in a flood-prone hotspot fund locally identified adaptation measures, rather than relying solely on post-disaster rehabilitation funds.

GMA NEWS

Next UN chief must prove that global cooperation works, says DFA
By: Jean Mangaluz

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday said that the next United Nations (UN) Secretary-General must prove that international cooperation still works amid rising geopolitical tensions.

DFA Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said that the UN was founded on a simple and powerful promise: that every nation, regardless of its size and strength, had a voice.

“The next Secretary General must do more than lead an institution. The next Secretary General must help restore faith in multilateralism itself, bridging divisions, defending the UN Charter and demonstrating that international cooperation could still deliver meaningful results,” Lazaro said in the DFA’s commemoration of United Nations Day, which falls on October 24.

“It is our hope to call upon the United Nations to renew its purpose, restore confidence in its institutions and uphold the principles upon which it was founded,” she said.

A new UN Secretary-General will be selected in the remaining months of 2026 and will assume office in 2027, replacing António Guterres of Portugal, whose second five-year term ends on December 31, 2026.

UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines Arnaud Peral stressed that the next Secretary-General must have the confidence and support of member states to effectively carry out the organization’s mandate.

“In such a complex world, effective collective action requires a Secretary-General empowered to convene, to mediate, and speak with independence,” Peral said.

He also emphasized the importance of collective action among UN member states in addressing global challenges, including armed conflicts, climate change, and sustainable development.

West Philippine Sea

Lazaro also underscored the importance of a strong and effective United Nations for countries like the Philippines, particularly amid the ongoing maritime dispute with China in the West Philippine Sea.

“For the Philippines, the stakes are particularly high. As a nation that has long championed international law in the East and South China Sea, we know that a strong United Nations is not

merely desirable; it is indispensable, especially for nations whose security rests not on power but on principle," she said.

Her remarks comes amidst the Philippines' continuing efforts to defend its sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea, as China maintains its sweeping claims over nearly the entire South China Sea despite the 2016 Arbitral Ruling, which invalidated Beijing's historic rights claims exceeding its maritime entitlements under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China continues to reject the ruling, which is legally binding on both countries.

The statement also comes amid escalating diplomatic tensions, with the Chinese Embassy in Manila issuing strongly worded statements against Philippine officials and lawmakers, describing some as "anti-China politicians" and referring to what it calls "anti-China forces."

Turning point

Lazaro said the UN stands at a turning point amid geopolitical tensions and challenges to international law.

The very principles of the UN were also being tested, as well as the world's confidence in its ability to implement them.

"The question is no longer simply whether the United Nations remains relevant, it's whether it can remain effective in a world that increasingly questions the value of multilateralism itself. This is what makes the selection of the next UN Secretary General so consequential," Lazaro said.

She emphasized that the global organization's next leader must restore international confidence in multilateralism and demonstrate the organization's ability to uphold peace, justice, and international law.

"The next Secretary-General must do more than lead the institution. The next Secretary-General must help restore faith in multilateralism itself by bridging divisions, defending the UN Charter, and demonstrating that international cooperation can still deliver meaningful results," she added.

Lazaro said that the Philippines had a high stake in the UN, as it has long championed peaceful resolutions to international disputes.

"We know that a strong United Nations is not merely desirable; it is indispensable. Especially for nations whose security rests not on power, but on principle," Lazaro said.

The DFA's commemoration also saw a panel discussion which included Kabataan Partylist Renee Co, The Straits Times journalist Mara Cepeda and People's Budget Coalition organizer Kenneth Abante.

Various diplomats were also in attendance.

SUNSTAR

School measures vs very strong El Niño not one-size-fits-all – DepEd chief
By: Evangel Ibay

The Department of Education (DepEd) on Thursday reiterated that measures in basic education are in place to cushion the looming impact of the very strong El Niño.

In a television interview, DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara said the actual response will depend on the situation at the local levels, especially during extreme heat.

“We are trying to go as granular as we can para hindi naman (so that it’s not) one size fits all,” he said.

The DepEd earlier announced the implementation of the 4H framework to ensure safety and learning continuity in all schools nationwide.

The four-level framework includes “Hayo, Hinay, Hinga and Hinto” — wherein in-person classes will continue under manageable heat conditions; modified or structured blended learning under heat stress; reduced academic requirements alongside provision of learning packets during extreme heat or shortage of water; and class suspension amid heat index with health risk, respectively.

Angara said both local government units (LGUs) and school administrations have the discretion to implement class suspension or resumption based on actual weather conditions.

Besides ensuring proper ventilation in classrooms and provision of clean drinking water, the education chief mentioned more flexible uniform rules, where physical education (PE) uniform or more comfortable clothes may be worn.

“We are also relaxing the uniform rules for both learners and teachers, basta (as long as) dignified,” Angara said.

Solar power in public schools

Angara, meanwhile, mentioned that the agency will opt for the utilization of solar power to ensure sustainable access to electricity.

“In the long term, dapat mag-solar power na po tayo (we must have solar power). Although it takes time — it’s quite expensive,” he said.

“Ito na ang direksyon natin dahil siguro hindi na magbabago itong climate change natin (This is our direction because perhaps climate change will no longer change). And we are seeing hotter and more extreme weather disturbances.”

In a separate Viber message, Angara said areas most susceptible to extreme heat must be prioritized in solarization.

“Ideally, the more crowded schools and where power is expensive, and hotter areas,” he told the Philippine News Agency.

Angara added that the funding will be sourced through its partnership with the National Electrification Administration (NEA).

In April, the DepEd said it is eyeing the solarization of public schools in 2027.

In February, the agency inked its collaboration with the NEA for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to power last mile schools or those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs).

Infrastructure equity

The DepEd, meanwhile, stressed its commitment to equity in infrastructure — emphasizing the need for data-driven criteria for classroom construction.

This is in response to the report of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) on gaps in allocations for local government units (LGUs), incurring the highest estimated shortages based on initial 2026 allocations.

In a separate statement, Angara acknowledged the EDCOM’s report and assured commitment to secure “strategic partnerships” with qualified LGUs.

“Ang alokasyon natin para sa mga silid-aralan ay dapat direktang tumutugon sa mga eskwelahang pinakamatindi ang pangangailangan (Our allocation for classrooms must directly respond to schools with the most severe needs),” he said.

“Kailangan nakabase sa tunay na datos ang ating mga desisyon para bawat pisong inilalaan natin, tunay na nararamdaman sa ating mga paaralan (Our decision should be based on factual data so that every peso allocated will be truly felt in our schools).”

To date, the agency noted the lack of available buildable space for regular or prefab classrooms in some schools due to the existing unsafe buildings needing to be demolished.

Hence, the DepEd said it is exploring other avenues and other modalities beyond traditional classroom construction.

Part of this is the deployment of a multi-pronged strategy, integrating Department of Public Works and Highways-led construction, LGU partnerships, Public-Private Partnerships, DepEd

Learning Continuity Spaces and collaborative initiatives with both government and private sector organizations.

Under the LGU-led classroom construction, allocations cover 439 LGUs, 1,955 schools, and 8,777 classrooms.

This infrastructure rollout spans 81 provincial LGUs accounting for 4,043 classrooms across 1,022 schools; 127 city LGUs covering 3,123 classrooms across 468 schools; and 231 municipal LGUs encompassing 1,611 classrooms across 465 schools.

The DepEd also has tripartite agreements with the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation, with 48 LGUs securing 576 classrooms for construction in priority communities.

THE JAPAN TIMES

What can Asia do to avoid crossing crucial climate tipping points?

By: Tomoko Otake

Petaling Jaya, Malaysia – Ambulance sirens blaring throughout cities amid deadly heat waves. Sustained wildfires that worsen cross-border air pollution and kill thousands. Weakening ocean currents that devastate crops and flood communities.

These are some of the signs of a planet approaching critical thresholds as a result of human-induced climate change. Beyond these climate tipping points, the Earth's natural systems could undergo self-propelling, potentially irreversible changes.

How close are we to crossing the thresholds? And more importantly, what can Asia, home to about 60% of the world's population, do to avert them? That was the central question at the four-day Global Tipping Points Conference held in Malaysia earlier this month. It was the third edition of the conference series, which was launched in Britain in 2022, and the first one to be held in Asia.

With global warming now set to breach 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, failing to meet the limit agreed upon by the 2015 Paris Agreement, scientists say the Earth's systems are at risk of crossing multiple climate tipping points.

For one, coral reefs in warm tropical waters are dying at an unprecedented rate and scale, as their thermal tipping point of 1.2 C of warming has already been crossed. Nearly all of the world's coral reefs may be gone by 2075, the International Union for Conservation of Nature warned last week.

That means the diverse ecosystem that hosts over a million species of marine life, as well as a key revenue source for the fisheries and tourism industries, is being lost. Parts of polar ice sheets and some regional mountain glaciers may have also crossed tipping points, while the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, a giant ocean current that moves heat and nutrients to the north across the Atlantic Ocean, is at risk of collapse. If it continues to weaken, it would make Northwest Europe's winters more severe while prolonging heat waves in the Southern Hemisphere.

"The fact is ... overshoot (of the 1.5 C target) is now inevitable," said climatologist and conference co-chair Johan Rockstrom of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. He was referring to a United Nations Environment Program report in September that concluded that the only option left for humanity to avert catastrophic impacts of climate change is to take the "overshoot, peak and decline" scenario.

“The challenge is to go from linear incremental change at best to now find transformative, many times exponential, pathways towards a safe landing that can secure prosperity, but also equity and resilience for humanity,” he said.

The conference, held in a suburban township southwest of Kuala Lumpur, was also impacted by an ongoing environmental and health crisis: many attendees wore masks and complained of sore throats due to the transboundary toxic haze, caused by slash-and-burn agricultural clearing and peatland fires in Indonesia — a crisis that was made worse by climate change.

Speakers and participants stressed, however, that “positive tipping points” are already emerging in many sectors and regions.

Tim Lenton, founding director of the Global Systems Institute at the University of Exeter and another co-chair of the conference, said that if we carefully craft a social and economic system that develops, adopts and amplifies zero-emissions technologies such as electric vehicles and solar panels, thus moving away from fossil fuels, we can tip the balance in the right direction.

In Norway, for example, the percentage of EVs in new car sales has grown over the past decade to reach almost 100%. Lenton credited the work of musician and environmentalist Morten Harket, who rigorously campaigned and won support for policies that incentivized the uptake of EVs.

“A very few people, but committed actors with a coherent plan, can tip a whole market and country,” Lenton said.

Another example is the recent solar panel boom in Pakistan, where, as a result of dramatic falls in solar panel prices, people who previously had no access to electricity are rapidly installing PV panels in off-grid or mini-grid settings.

Attendees from Pakistan said that rooftop solar panels are so popular in the country now that they are being used as wedding dowries.

According to Renewables First, a Pakistan-based think tank, and U.K.-based Ember, 27 gigawatts of distributed solar was deployed in Pakistan in just two years through June 2025, the same capacity as all coal, gas and oil plants that have ever been built in the country.

The country’s solar PV imports surged from under 1 GW in 2018 to over 51 GW by early 2026, which also drove a 40% drop in oil and gas imports between 2022 and 2024.

Apart from the energy transition, the conference, attended by over 500 experts and stakeholders from across Asia and Europe, covered how to mobilize law, finance, health systems and religious communities more efficiently to catalyze positive changes for the environment.

Toward the end of the conference, with British singer-songwriter Cat Stevens in attendance, a 260-page “faith-based toolkit” was unveiled to help faith leaders incorporate planetary health in their religious teachings, considering that over three-quarters of the world’s population identifies as religious.

Jemilah Mahmood, a gynecologist and executive director of Sunway Centre for Planetary Health who served as the conference co-chair, said the event was aimed at introducing tipping points science to people in Asia and giving them the opportunities to speak for themselves about the positive changes that are happening in this region.

“We do have a sense of urgency ... we don’t have time,” she told reporters after the conference. “We need to rapidly scale up what we’re doing (positively). And therefore we have to recognize that we can’t do it alone. We now need to build a coalition that will move forward together.”

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

The future will test our promises
By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

Years ago, in Lake Sebu, I met Nanay Rosie Sula, a T'boli woman leader and Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan awardee. She recalled when elders could read the seasons, fish were plentiful, and nature was a gift to be cared for. Then she said: "We began to abuse nature and got more than we needed." The climate, she told me, was changing.

Nanay Rosie's message stayed with me. It was not a forecast. It was an account of change felt in a community's relationship with land, water and livelihood. It asked: When the signs are clear, what will those with the power to decide do?

The United Nations was founded to spare succeeding generations the scourge of war. But peace also depends on safe homes, food and water and livelihoods that endure. Climate change places them all under growing strain.

The warning is now measured in degrees. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) says the past three years were the three warmest on record. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres has put the hard truth plainly: a temporary overshoot above 1.5°C is now inevitable. Our task is to keep that breach as small and short as possible, and bring temperatures back below 1.5°C as quickly as possible. Every fraction of a degree matters, and some harm during overshoot cannot be reversed.

For the Philippines, that warning has an immediate face. WMO expects El Niño to intensify to very strong levels and persist through February 2027. It is a natural climate pattern unfolding across oceans and an atmosphere already warmed by greenhouse gas emissions. It can deepen heat and drought while shifting rain elsewhere — too little water in some places, too much in others.

A nationwide 2024 survey by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, covering 4,608 Filipinos, found that more than 85 percent believe climate change is real. Yet 66 percent had taken no measures to adapt, while only 22 percent viewed government climate efforts positively. High awareness has not consistently become readiness, and public policy has not always become visible protection.

What, then, has changed? And what must still change?

The Philippines has built its climate architecture over time. The National Climate Change Action Plan established priorities for 2011 to 2028. Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s leadership, the country completed its first National Adaptation Plan for 2023 to 2050, underscored predictive

governance, strengthened local climate planning, and expanded adaptation finance through the People's Survival Fund. These are consequential advances.

Their test is whether climate policies and information do more than confirm what we already fear. They must change decisions, question assumptions behind established practices, and compel us to reconsider where and how we build, farm, invest, manage water and protect health. Prediction has value when it helps government act before risks become losses.

That is the test of the Climate Change Commission, 17 years after its establishment and of the system it was created to coordinate. The Commission must coordinate, monitor and evaluate government climate action and mainstream it across national, sectoral and local development. Departments and local governments must align decisions, budgets and implementation within their mandates. The CCC's relevance lies in making these responsibilities cohere.

The anniversary should invite neither self-congratulation nor a search for one institution to blame. It should make us examine what the CCC and other agencies have delivered, where we have fallen short, and whether national coordination has the authority, capacity and resources for a mandate growing with every climate risk.

Government cannot complete this work alone. Business must align investment with climate risk; academe must bring knowledge closer to public decisions; civil society and communities must test whether policies work where people live. A whole-of-government mandate requires a whole-of-nation response.

That response must recognize whose knowledge shapes its choices. Indigenous Peoples are rights-holders and leaders whose knowledge and governance are inseparable from ancestral lands and waters. Their participation should influence the plans, investments and safeguards that determine resilience in their communities.

The UN faces a similar test. Its relevance will be measured not by promises remembered on UN Day, but by promises delivered. At COP31 in Antalya, countries must limit overshoot, accelerate adaptation and make finance, technology and capacity support accessible to vulnerable nations. For the Philippines, global cooperation must meet national resolve with the means to implement.

Nanay Rosie's words were a warning, but also a measure of responsibility. Awareness is not safety. Policy is not yet protection. The future will test our promises by what they changed and whether we changed in time.

CCC chairs carbon markets panel

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) welcomes its designation as chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Carbon Markets (IACCM) under Executive Order (EO) 127, which establishes a governance framework for the Philippines' participation in international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and in the Voluntary Carbon Market.

Signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., EO 127 institutionalizes the country's climate change mitigation efforts and seeks to unlock international climate finance. As IACCM chair, the CCC will guide inter-agency coordination and help ensure that carbon market policies support the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), national greenhouse gas inventory, and climate transparency reporting obligations under the Paris Agreement. The Commission will also serve as the committee's Secretariat and provide technical and administrative support.

This move supports the direction set by the Philippine Development Plan 20230-2028, particularly Chapter 15 on accelerating climate action and strengthening disaster resilience. The chapter calls for stronger collaboration with the private sector and the international community to scale up sustainable and green investments. It also advances the transition to a low-carbon economy while promoting economic growth and resilience.

"Carbon markets can help advance these goals by providing an additional channel for private capital and international climate finance. Credible carbon projects can support emissions reduction and other climate solutions. Clear rules and reliable accounting will help protect environmental integrity and give investors greater certainty," said CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje.

The CCC's chairmanship builds on its existing leadership functions in national climate policy and reporting. As Secretariat of the NDC Technical Working Group, the Commission supports the assessment of sectoral policies and measures against the country's NDC. It also supports the monitoring, reporting, and verification of NDC implementation and the fulfillment of national and international reporting requirements.

Under Executive Order 174, s. 2014, the CCC serves as the overall lead agency for the Philippine National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. It coordinates and consolidates emissions data from sector lead agencies. This information provides an important evidence base for national climate policy and emissions accounting.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

CCC advances country's climate reporting system institutionalization

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), with support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through its technical cooperation project, is strengthening the Philippines' capacity to implement, monitor, and report on its climate commitments through the validation of the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) Guidance.

The Validation Workshop on the Finalization of the Philippines' NDC-MRV Guidance Document brought together concerned government agencies to review the proposed framework, clarify institutional responsibilities, and build concurrence on the procedures for monitoring and reporting the implementation of the country's NDC.

In his message, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje emphasized the need to resolve remaining issues and secure agreement among concerned agencies to ensure that the NDC-MRV Guidance provides a clear basis for implementation.

"We must resolve remaining issues and confirm that the Guidance provides a clear basis for implementation, including agreement on agency responsibilities, data requirements, review procedures, reporting timelines, and templates," Borje said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nobuhiko Aoki, Senior Representative of the JICA Philippines Office, underscored the importance of ensuring that the guidelines remain useful beyond the technical cooperation period.

"As our climate change advisory support to CCC is scheduled to be completed in July 2027, I hope that the guidelines that will be developed will be properly utilized and serve as leading documents that will be updated based on the needs of time and circumstances," Aoki said.

The workshop focused on validating the updated NDC-MRV Guidance, incorporating comments from participating agencies, and establishing a common understanding of the proposed reporting arrangements, information flows, and templates. The discussions are expected to inform the finalization and subsequent institutionalization of the guidance.

The initiative builds on the Philippines' existing climate governance and greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting systems. Under Republic Act No. 9729, or the Climate Change Act of 2009, the CCC serves as the government's lead policy-making body for coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating climate change programs and action plans.

In relation to this, Executive Order No. 174, s. 2014, which institutionalized the Philippine Greenhouse Gas Inventory Management and Reporting System (PGHGIMRS), also provides an

established foundation for inter-agency coordination in managing and reporting the country's GHG emissions.

The NDC-MRV framework seeks to build on these arrangements by clarifying the responsibilities and processes needed to monitor and report on the implementation of the Philippines' climate commitments.

The Philippines' NDC sets its climate mitigation commitment, targeting a 75 percent reduction and avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions against cumulative business-as-usual emissions from 2020 to 2030 across the agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and energy sectors. The NDC Implementation Plan (NDCIP) translates this commitment into implementation measures and identifies actions across relevant sectors.

Alongside mitigation, the Philippines' National Adaptation Plan (NAP), developed under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., provides a long-term framework for strengthening climate resilience and addressing the country's vulnerabilities to climate change. Together, these national climate plans underscore the need for coordinated government action, reliable information, and monitoring systems that can help track progress and inform policy decisions.

Through the NDC-MRV Guidance, the country establishes clearer institutional arrangements, procedures, and responsibilities for monitoring, reporting, and verifying NDC implementation. The guidance covers the proposed roles of concerned agencies, reporting procedures and timelines, information flows, and reporting templates.

The validation workshop convened xx NGAs, including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Department of Transportation, which serve as sectoral lead agencies for the relevant areas of the country's climate reporting system.

With technical assistance from JICA through the project "Climate Change Advisor in the Philippines," the CCC will use the workshop's results to guide the finalization of the NDC-MRV Guidance and advance the institutional arrangements needed to support the country's climate reporting obligations.

THE CLIMATE WATCH

COP31 names 10 co-facilitators to steer key climate talks in Antalya

By: Sohanur Rahman

Ministerial pairs from 10 countries tasked with building consensus on finance, adaptation, mitigation, just transition and oceans ahead of Antalya summit.

Ten senior representatives from developed and developing countries have been appointed to help steer negotiations on climate finance, emissions reductions, adaptation, just transition and ocean-related climate action at next month's UN climate conference, COP31, in Antalya, Türkiye.

Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, who will serve as COP31 President of Negotiations, announced the five pairs on Tuesday as preparations intensify for the November 9–20 summit.

Bowen said the appointments were part of the established practice of assigning ministers and senior officials to facilitate consultations on difficult negotiating issues, helping countries narrow differences and build consensus.

He expressed hope that their involvement would help deliver "an ambitious outcome based on implementation and acceleration."

Bowen also thanked the appointed representatives on behalf of himself and Türkiye's Environment Minister Murat Kurum, the incoming COP31 President.

Who will guide the discussions?

The five pairs will focus on the following areas:

– Mitigation: India's Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and Germany's Environment Minister Carsten Schneider will facilitate discussions on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening climate action.

– Adaptation: The United Kingdom's Miatta Fahnbulleh and Sierra Leone's Jiwoh Abdulai will guide consultations on strengthening resilience to climate impacts and supporting vulnerable countries.

– Finance: France's Minister for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity and International Negotiations on Climate and Nature, Monique Barbut, will work alongside Robert E.A. Borje, Vice Chairperson and Executive Director of the Philippines' Climate Change Commission.

– Just Transition: Mexico's Alicia Bárcena and Poland's Krzysztof Bolesta will facilitate discussions on ensuring that the shift towards cleaner economies protects workers, communities and vulnerable groups.

– Ocean: Palau's Steven Victor and Canada's Julie Dabrusin will help gather views on ocean-based climate solutions, coastal resilience and related priorities.

The appointments reflect an effort to bring together perspectives from developed and developing countries, including major emitters and nations particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Pairing representatives from different regions is intended to strengthen trust across negotiating groups and help identify common ground on politically sensitive issues. However, the appointees do not formally represent entire regional blocs in their facilitation roles.

The ocean consultations will focus on gathering priorities and identifying opportunities for climate action rather than necessarily constituting a separate formal negotiating track.

Unusual Türkiye–Australia leadership arrangement

COP31 will take place at the Antalya Expo Center in Türkiye from November 9 to 20 under an unusual leadership arrangement agreed following negotiations between Türkiye and Australia.

Türkiye will hold the conference presidency, with Murat Kurum serving as president, while Australia will oversee the formal negotiations through Bowen as President of Negotiations.

Under the arrangement, Australia is responsible for steering negotiations and preparing negotiating texts in consultation with Türkiye, while the host country retains responsibility for the overall presidency and conference organisation.

The division of responsibilities makes Bowen's role in selecting ministerial facilitators particularly significant.

The co-facilitators are expected to consult informally with countries and negotiating groups before the summit and help identify possible areas of agreement. They may also assist in resolving outstanding issues during the conference.

Their role is to build political consensus rather than impose decisions, which ultimately require agreement among participating countries.

Climate finance remains a major challenge

Climate finance is expected to remain a major source of disagreement at COP31 as developing countries continue to demand greater access to predictable, affordable and accessible funding.

A central challenge is translating existing financial commitments into resources that countries can use to implement national climate plans, strengthen adaptation and respond to increasingly severe climate impacts.

At the Pacific Pre-COP31 meeting in Fiji earlier this month, participants identified high borrowing costs, debt pressures, complicated accreditation requirements and lengthy approval procedures as major barriers to accessing climate finance.

The Philippines' Robert Borje, who co-facilitated finance and investment discussions alongside France's Monique Barbut, called for stronger implementation of existing commitments and practical measures to improve financial access.

Participants also discussed increasing grant-based and highly concessional finance for adaptation, simplifying application procedures and strengthening cooperation with multilateral development banks.

The just transition discussions will also be closely watched as countries seek to advance a mechanism designed to support equitable and inclusive transitions towards low-carbon economies.

Key differences remain over how such a mechanism should operate, what financial and technical support it should provide, and how developing countries can pursue cleaner development without placing disproportionate burdens on workers and vulnerable communities.

From pledges to implementation

COP31 comes amid growing pressure on governments to move beyond repeated climate commitments and demonstrate measurable progress on emissions reductions, adaptation and financial support.

The Türkiye–Australia leadership has identified implementation and acceleration as central priorities, with particular attention to advancing the energy transition, strengthening resilience and improving access to finance.

Bowen has previously stressed that the conference must translate international commitments into practical action, including investment in renewable energy, electrification, modern electricity grids and climate-resilient infrastructure.

The five pairs of co-facilitators will play an important diplomatic role in determining how far countries can narrow disagreements before ministers enter the final stages of negotiations in Antalya.

Their success will depend not only on bridging differences between developed and developing countries but also on whether political consultations help deliver concrete progress on climate finance, emissions reductions, adaptation and a fair transition towards cleaner economies.

For climate-vulnerable nations, the ultimate test of COP31 will be whether promises of implementation and acceleration translate into accessible funding, stronger international cooperation and meaningful protection for communities already facing the consequences of climate change.

EXPLAINED PH

Scorched at a stalemate

By: Audley Aban

As rising temperatures and uncontrollable climates arrive at their tipping points, the battle between humanity and nature has reached a scorching stalemate. One that desperately requires a recalibration of efforts toward actionable measures and not simply towards mindless scapegoating—which can only be done if we play our pieces right.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) describes the regular El Niño as a natural climate pattern that originates in the Pacific Ocean and is capable of shifting weather on a global scale. Though its direct meaning from Spanish translates to “little boy”, there is nothing small about its impact on the planet. When it begins, trade winds that usually blow along the equator weaken, pushing back warm water toward the east, heating up our waters and disrupting the usual cycles of surrounding marine environments. South American fishermen spotted this unusual warming way back in the 1600s, but truth be told, it has only gotten worse as the centuries passed.

Whenever El Niño rolls around, the conventional Filipino household immediately knows what to do. As hotter rays shine in through the wooden windowsills, unspoken rules during these blazing moments arise. Feeling sweaty? Lots of replacement undershirts. Feeling parched? A wide array of cool refreshments inside the refrigerator. Feeling fatigued? A flexible hammock set up outside in the breeze. For every inconvenience, Filipinos have a contingency plan to counter it, and in the past few years, this has worked in our favor, allowing us to normalize the impact of these climate events. This has long been a system engraved into our heritage as Filipinos, which makes one think that we might have gotten used to it by now. Yet, it seems that we have yet to learn our lesson, since another predicament is brewing in the Pacific as we speak, and from the looks of it, our archipelago is far from ready to face it.

The US-based Climate Impact Lab reports that around 451,000 people around the world are at risk of heat-related deaths because of the onset of an intensified El Niño, which is expected by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) to arrive in the Philippines by October and run up until 2027. While the return of this heat-mongering phenomenon is no longer a new occurrence for our archipelago that experiences somewhat of an ‘eternal summer’, this upcoming act of nature is far different, far stronger, and far deadlier than before, with agencies now referring to it as a Super El Niño.

Here in the country, the report warned that more or less 6,500 citizens could potentially go through heat-related deaths. This drastic revelation underscores the severity of this once ‘natural’ phenomenon and, if we allow it to, it tells us a lot about what measures must still be taken to protect us from what’s to come. In challenges like this, it’s never enough to look at the opposing side at surface-level; it’s vital for us to magnify the issue to understand what makes this time-bound climate bomb tick.

Though not entirely felt, this battle is one that our country has been facing for decades. The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has become such an integral aspect of Filipino livelihood, since climate patterns, weather events, and other environmental factors have major parts to play in how the citizens of our country thrive. This goes both ways, however, since whenever these phenomena intensify to unprecedented levels, it leaves most of the country's resources, ecosystems, and even public welfare, vulnerable to risks. As such, this cements El Niño as an adversity already well-versed within the Filipino lens, but even then, it should not be something to be underestimated, undermined, or downplayed as a mere 'change' of seasons or 'shift' in weather.

For all its worth, the unrelenting impact of El Niño in previous years should already be sufficient evidence to cement its danger to susceptible countries like ours. We are an archipelago perpetually intertwined with the natural resources given to us, but with this connection also comes the impending burden of suffering when thresholds are broken and lines are crossed—because just like in chess, a single move can lead to either our victory or our loss.

Just take the nation's agriculture, for example. As a major contributor to the global agricultural landscape, the Philippines boasts of various locations and areas that are designated for the development of proper cultivation systems and farming programs. Yet, these seemingly fundamental aspects of Philippine society are at the brink of desecration, and the situation is not getting any better with the nearing onslaught of this strengthened El Niño. In the past, farmers considered El Niño as a period of waiting and repose, since it meant that crops would be drier than usual and operations would be temporarily halted. Now, however, as the incoming phenomenon grows even stronger, so should the country's programs that are meant to salvage us from this dilemma.

At the start of this match, the battlefield may have been indifferent, but as time went by, more and more of our pieces were overpowered, taking a toll on the food we consume, the wellness of our bodies, and the ease of our lives. The Department of Agriculture (DA) warned that when this Super El Niño hits, rice production may decline by up to 700,000 metric tons, or about 3.5% of its annual production rate. With rice as a staple food in every Filipino household, food insecurity is sure to take root and when it comes to livelihoods, our humble farmers will inevitably face scarcity and impoverishment. Imagine a time when the primary source of carbohydrates and energy that the average Filipino needs to function faces low supply rates. That isn't just an attack on our crops, it's disruption of a vital pillar that keeps our stomachs full and our welfare stable.

DA Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa also noted that potential effects include massive droughts in some areas, whilst heavy rainfall and harsh flooding in the rest. This intense volatility with our climate patterns becomes especially destructive for low-lying communities and areas that are notably prone to natural hazards. Although the predicted impact of El Niño on agriculture is not yet set to arrive until the first semester of next year, experts worry that it could lead to devastating consequences on our agriculturally-reliant nation. So, to cushion this, there should

be tangible and evident measures set towards preparing agricultural agencies and farmers from the immediate detriments of the Super El Niño, ranging from nationwide initiatives to localized efforts.

Aside from this, the people arduously working behind our societal functions are also extremely susceptible to this intensified phenomenon. Climate Change Commission (CCC) Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz reported that by 2027, this Super El Niño can force temperature thresholds to rise up as high as 45 degrees Celsius or even more in certain parts of the country. Living under the sultry summer sun of the Philippines is already a tiring experience, since even the smallest movements lead to buckets worth of sweat. However, once our already high temperatures go even higher, which is honestly impossible to imagine with how it already is, it no longer becomes a relatable experience—it turns into an exhausting health ailment. (add opinion on health)

Sadly though, this close-call battle doesn't end with just agriculture and health. Another piece that is endangered by the Super El Niño's opposition is the state of our environment. PAGASA's annual report of the country being crossed by 20 tropical cyclones every year is further worsened, as stronger typhoons and low pressure areas are expected to hit critical areas, including Hawaii, Japan, China, and the Philippines. Much of the country's expenditures come from projects that aim to either repair areas by natural hazards or build precautionary measures against said hazards.

With the country known as a biodiversity hotspot and an environmental treasure, the heightened prevalence of ecological issues caused by a strengthened El Niño is a threat to all life on the planet, and it's one that must be regarded with more seriousness.

Consequently, now that humanity has reached this crucial stalemate against the natural world, with this newly uncovered Super El Niño as one of its major by-products, it surely makes one think about what happens next or what can be done to counter such a powerful blow. While this climate jeopardy is indeed a prickly thorn in the lives of not just Filipinos but the lives of everyone that will be affected by the Super El Niño, it should not leave us stagnant and stuck in a position where our efforts simply dissipate just because this deadlock situation looks hopeless. On the contrary, our current state should become a motivating factor to finally take action and turn the tables on this heated match.

While yes, it's commendable to see that there are existing programs to gauge the possible effects of the Super El Niño and effectively prepare the country against them, it is vital to ensure that these allocated resources truly are used accountably and produced responsibly. We are no longer new to the issue of important funds and resources suddenly disappearing, leading to substandard projects, but in this case where the welfare of our citizens, our livelihoods, and even the environment is at stake, there should no longer be room for corruptive acts to propagate.

Malacanang Palace Press Officer Claire Castro has reported a P6.2 billion assistance fund from the Department of Budget and Management for fertilizer and fuel assistance in preparation for

Super El Niño, whilst solar irrigation projects are also being requested. For areas that are extremely vulnerable to said unstable conditions, alternative livelihoods for local farmers are also being explored, in order to not force them into working within such detrimental surroundings. More so, there are likewise opportunities to work with wider agencies like the World Food Programme. These agricultural initiatives are all competent and vital steps towards ensuring the safety and continuity of our agri-projects, so hopefully, they are implemented sensibly and with purpose.

Other than this, P39.82 billion was provided to support disaster management efforts, summing up to around P46 billion worth of funding this year to address the Super El Niño. Simultaneously, a Strategic National Action Plan was made by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) to highlight and prioritize the vital necessities during these trying times, such as food and water. These prominent executive programs constitute major appropriations that are fundamental for the wellness of every Filipino, especially those that will be directly affected by the intensified phenomenon. What the nation has prepared for the Super El Niño are respectable and meaningful. It simply comes down to how effective these measures will be implemented, and for the betterment of all, let's cross our fingers and lend a helping hand to make sure that it does.

Most people dismiss this issue, saying that things like this Super El Niño are natural phenomena and that whatever form of human effort will be unable to stop it. While this is scientifically sound, since human actions cannot directly shift back our climate to its previous range, the negative effects of El Niño have brought so much disaster and discord into the lives of Filipinos that it has become something that must be addressed accordingly.

As the leading meteorological and weather-based agency, DOST-PAGASA provides firsthand monitoring of the current state of our climate, and in the event of the Super El Niño's onset, they must become watchful pieces that decipher the opposition's movements carefully and progress from this stalemate. Whatever disaster reaches the country, PAGASA serves as the first line of surveillance, and with this, actions must not stop at awareness and information. These crucial pieces of data must be used accordingly to foster solutions that actually catalyzes change and not just gives out an empty sense of hope for the country.

Partnerships with the NDRRMC are also crucial, since they aid in identifying potential hazards and disasters that may stem from the Super El Niño, providing proper countermeasures, and ensuring widespread conduct of said efforts. Initiatives must never stop at mere warnings or phone alerts; there must be tangible measures that are felt, seen, and accomplished with accountability. Conducting precautionary efforts before the disaster hits goes a long way to avoid casualties and collateral.

Being the smallest branch of governance, local government units must also be part of the discussion. They are the closest form of authority that our citizens can cling to, and as such, they are the primary mode of guidance that can address issues related to the worsening

climate. By doing so, they are ably prepared for any drastic shifts that could affect their communities, potentially implementing projects designed for their specified needs.

This battle between humanity and nature has arguably worsened over the ages, and only now has it reached its tipping point. Though the planet is at a rough, climactic patch, there are still ways to protect Filipinos from whatever the monstrosities of nature throws in its way. Through united efforts, greater awareness, and proper usage of allocated resources toward efficient disaster mitigation, our sectors may still stand a chance against the Super El Niño's detriments.

By doing so, we will be able to progress from this impending impasse, ensure the welfare of the country, and finally heal from being scorched at a stalemate.

MANILA BULLETIN

Legarda pushes for climate action beyond disaster response; says livelihood security a must

By: By Dhel Nazario

Senator Loren Legarda is urging the government to strengthen climate policies that not only protect Filipinos from disasters but also help them secure stable livelihoods, food and water supplies, and better economic opportunities as climate risks intensify.

Marking the 17th anniversary of the Climate Change Act of 2009, which she principally authored and sponsored, Legarda says climate action must address the long-term consequences of extreme weather on household incomes, access to basic necessities, and people's ability to improve their lives.

“Hindi dapat habambuhay na nagsisimula sa wala ang ating mga kababayan. Hindi sapat na nakaligtas sila sa bagyo, baha, o tagtuyot. Dapat may pagkakataon din silang umasenso, makapag-ipon, mapag-aral ang kanilang mga anak, at magkaroon ng maayos na kabuhayan nang hindi laging nangangamba na mawawala ang lahat ng kanilang pinaghirapan (Our fellow Filipinos should not have to spend their lives starting over from nothing. It is not enough for them to survive typhoons, floods, or droughts. They must also have the opportunity to get ahead, save money, send their children to school, and build stable livelihoods without constantly fearing that everything they have worked hard for will be lost),” Legarda said.

Republic Act (RA) No. 9729, signed into law on Oct. 23, 2009, established the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and integrated climate change adaptation and mitigation into government policies and development planning.

Adaptation measures help communities prepare for climate impacts, while mitigation seeks to limit global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting cleaner energy, and protecting forests and other natural carbon sinks.

Under its updated 2026 Nationally Determined Contribution, the Philippines committed to a 75 percent reduction and avoidance of projected cumulative emissions from 2025 to 2035, although most of the target is conditional on international support.

The urgency of these measures was underscored by the United Nations Environment Programme's Emissions Gap Report 2026, released on Oct. 21, which warned that global warming is expected to exceed the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.

The economic stakes are also significant for the Philippines. The World Bank's Philippines Country Climate and Development Report estimates that climate change could result in losses equivalent to as much as 13.6% of the country's gross domestic product by 2040 without

adequate action. Adaptation measures, meanwhile, could reduce projected losses by about two-thirds.

Domestically, the anticipated persistence of El Niño into the first half of 2027 could heighten the threat of dry spells and drought in parts of the country, according to forecasts cited in the statement.

In anticipation of these risks, Legarda issued a 10-point policy action plan on Oct. 19 covering water availability, agriculture, food security, and public health. The plan followed her filing of Senate Resolution (SR) No. 733, which seeks to address government preparedness for El Niño. “Kapag naapektuhan ang tubig at ani, ramdam din ito sa pagkain sa ating hapag at sa kita ng mga pamilya. Kaya hindi lang tayo dapat naghahanda sa mga epekto ng pagbabago ng klima. Kailangan din nating bawasan ang mga sanhi nito. Magkasabay dapat ang pagprotekta sa ating mga komunidad at ang pagbabawas ng greenhouse gas emissions,” Legarda emphasized.

Legarda cited several laws she has supported to strengthen climate resilience and environmental protection, including the People's Survival Fund Act (RA 10174), which established long-term financing for local climate adaptation projects, and the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (RA 10121), which strengthened the country's disaster preparedness framework.

She also principally authored the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (RA 11038), which expanded protections for ecologically important areas, and authored and co-sponsored the Loss and Damage Fund Board Act (RA 12019), granting juridical personality and legal capacity to the governing board of the international fund hosted by the Philippines.

In the 20th Congress, Legarda is pursuing additional measures, including Senate Bill No. 166, or the proposed Low Carbon Economy Act; Senate Bill No. 306, or the Philippine Circular Economy Promotion Act; and Senate Bill No. 310, or the National Water Resources Management Act.

She also filed Senate Bill (SB) No. 311, or the Indigenous Community Conserved Territories and Areas Act, which seeks to recognize Indigenous stewardship and protect ecosystems that sustain local communities.

Legarda acknowledged the work of scientists, local governments, Indigenous Peoples, environmental advocates, and communities in advancing climate action, stressing that emissions reduction and environmental protection must be accompanied by efforts to improve people's livelihoods.

“Labimpitong taon na ang lumipas mula nang maisabatas ang Climate Change Act. Marami pa tayong kailangang gawin, lalo na sa pagbabawas ng emissions at pagprotekta sa mga komunidad na unang nakararamdam ng epekto ng pagbabago ng klima. Ang mahalaga ay hindi lang natin matulungang makabangon ang mga tao sa bawat sakuna. Dapat mabigyan din natin

sila ng pagkakataong magkaroon ng matatag na kabuhayan at mas maayos na kinabukasan (Seventeen years have passed since the Climate Change Act was enacted. There is still much more we need to do, particularly in reducing emissions and protecting communities that are the first to feel the effects of climate change. What matters is that we do not simply help people recover from every disaster. We must also give them the opportunity to build stable livelihoods and secure a better future),” Legarda concluded.

BUSINESS MIRROR

Beyond the climate crisis: Turning risks into actions

CLIMATE change is one of the most significant challenges facing businesses and society today. According to World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the planet has already warmed by approximately 1.4°C above pre-industrial levels, contributing to more intense heatwaves, rising sea levels, declining crop yields, and accelerating biodiversity loss. These impacts extend beyond the environment, affecting how businesses operate, manage risks, allocate capital, and plan for long-term growth and resilience.

The International Day of Climate Action, observed annually on 24 October, provides an opportunity for organizations to reflect on these challenges and consider how meaningful climate action can strengthen resilience and support long-term value creation. Under the Paris Agreement, 194 countries have committed to limiting the rise in global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit warming by just 1.5°C.

In response, many organizations are aligning their business strategies with these broader global goals by setting emissions reduction targets, transitioning toward lower-carbon operations, and integrating climate considerations into long-term business planning.

Businesses are exposed to climate change through both physical and transition-related risks. Physical risks include typhoons, flooding, extreme heat, sea-level rise, and other climate-related hazards that can disrupt operations, damage facilities, and affect business continuity. These impacts can also extend across supply chains and logistics networks, influencing the availability and cost of materials, products, and services. At the workforce level, extreme heat and other environmental conditions may also affect employee health, safety, and productivity.

Physical and transition-related climate risks have significant financial and strategic implications for businesses. As a result, climate change has become more than an environmental concern. It can shape an organization's ability to remain competitive over the long term.

At the same time, the transition to a lower-carbon economy introduces a different set of business considerations. These considerations are particularly relevant in the Philippines, where exposure to typhoons, flooding, extreme heat, and sea-level rise heightens the importance of climate resilience.

Changes in regulations, technologies, customer preferences, and stakeholder expectations can influence existing products, services, assets, and business models. Organizations are also facing greater expectations to demonstrate credible climate commitments and provide reliable information on their climate-related performance.

The Climate Change Act of 2009 established the Climate Change Commission (CCC) to integrate climate change considerations across national, local, and sectoral policies. Key

measures include the 2026 Philippines' Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which sets a 75-percent greenhouse gas emissions reduction and avoidance target for 2025–2035, and the "National Adaptation Plan 2023–2050," which outlines a long-term approach to reducing climate vulnerability and strengthening resilience.

These policy measures reinforce the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement and signal the growing importance for businesses to integrate climate mitigation, adaptation, and sustainability into their strategies and operations.

As climate policies and regulatory landscape continue to evolve, climate and sustainability considerations are becoming increasingly relevant to corporate decision-making. Expectations from regulators, investors, lenders, customers, and other stakeholders further reinforce the importance of climate action in supporting regulatory readiness, effective risk management, access to capital, and operational resilience.

Understanding climate-related risks is an important starting point, but businesses can create greater value by turning that understanding into practical actions.

Organizations can begin by assessing their exposure to physical and transition risks across their operations, assets, supply chains, and broader value chains. Climate scenario analysis can help organizations assess the resilience of business strategies under different climate and transition pathways and its effect on their operations and financial performance over the short, medium, and long term. To support informed decision-making and monitor progress, strengthening climate-related data and metrics and improving reporting processes can help businesses track performance and prepare for evolving climate and sustainability reporting expectations. These insights can provide a foundation for a broader climate strategy, helping businesses move from understanding climate-related risks to identifying mitigation measures and opportunities.

In practice, climate action can take many forms, from improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening supply chain resilience, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure. Businesses can also explore products and services that support the transition to a lower-carbon economy, allowing them to manage climate-related risks while identifying new opportunities for growth and value creation.

Ultimately, climate action should not be treated as a standalone sustainability initiative. Embedding climate considerations across strategy, risk management, finance, operations, and governance can help organizations move beyond individual initiatives toward a more coordinated and resilient approach to long-term business planning.

At R.G. Manabat & Co. (KPMG in the Philippines), sustainability and climate considerations are part of the broader conversation on how businesses can align their commitments with business priorities. Understanding an organization's current position and identifying the sustainability issues and climate-related risks that may affect its operations and stakeholders are important

first steps. Climate risk and materiality assessments can help businesses identify and prioritize these issues, providing a basis for developing practical sustainability strategies and roadmaps.

The International Day of Climate Action provides an opportunity for businesses to look beyond climate commitments and consider how these commitments translate into meaningful business decisions and actions. For businesses in the Philippines, climate action is increasingly connected to resilience, regulatory readiness, operational efficiency, access to financing, and long-term competitiveness. Addressing climate change involves not only managing physical and transition risks but also identifying opportunities to create long-term value.

The opportunity for businesses is to move from understanding climate change to taking informed, measurable, and business-focused action. By embedding climate considerations into strategy, risk management, investment, and operational decisions, organizations can strengthen their ability to adapt, respond, and remain competitive in a changing business environment.

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